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COALITIONS

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Classified By: Ambassador for reasons 1.4(b,d).

11. (C) Summary. Roman Bezsmertniy, deputy head of the Presidential Secretariat for information policy and political tactician, told Ambassador July 27 that there was no truly good outcome for the upcoming elections, but he was focused on making sure Party of Regions stays committed to participating. In the end he expected a reluctant Regions to take part, but the Presidential Secretariat was doing all it could to ensure this happened; Bezsmertniy acknowledged that he had gone so far as to leak to the press in late July a fake Regions party list to give the illusion to the public that Regions was preparing for the campaign. After the elections, Bezsmertniy expected a Regions-Communists coalition to take power, unless President Yushchenko took immediate and decisive action. Of two bad choices (Tymoshenko and Regions), Bezsmertniy conceded that OU preferred BYuT, even though Tymoshenko was "the source of all evil." He thought that OU would be reluctant to join a broad coalition with Regions after all that has happened, unless Yushchenko were convinced that true reform was possible. In the medium term, according to Bezsmertniy, either Tymoshenko or Yanukovych as coalition partner will turn on Yushchenko as the presidential elections drew near. Bezsmertniy concluded that Ukraine needed a generational change in Ukrainian leaders to truly bring Ukraine the European standards and values that politicians say they want.

12. (C) Comment. Bezsmertniy's cynical, but honest analysis underscores how conflicted the Presidential Secretariat and Our Ukraine are about whether to pursue cooperation with Tymoshenko or Yanukovych. For all that Yushchenko has been burned by Party of Regions, that he would consider cooperation with them again speaks to both his deep distrust of Tymoshenko as well his need to try to heal the east-west split in Ukraine. Bezsmertniy's assertion that the presidential election is starting to factor into all sides' calculations about short-term alliances is on the mark. Increasingly, we are hearing that September 30 is merely a barometer for the next presidential vote in 2009. End summary and comment.

Getting Regions to the Election

13. (C) Bezsmertniy's bottom line was that the election probably will happen, but he would continue to study the alternatives just to be prepared for all eventualities. His concern was that if polls started to show that Regions might lose, they might decide to disrupt the elections rather than participate in a losing race. Bezsmertniy thought Regions's strategy of mounting a short election campaign with less

money invested into the organizational structure of a real campaign--focusing all resources on television ads--indicated its lack of enthusiasm for the elections. Only the continued argument that the current Rada is illegal will keep Regions focused on the elections. That was why the Presidential Secretariat sought an additional statement by the Pechersk

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court--published July 25--explaining its May 11 ruling that the CEC should dissolve OU's 2006 party list.

14. (C) Keeping Regions tied into the elections was also why the Presidential Secretariat had leaked a purported list of the top 50 names on Regions's party list. (Note. The list was leaked on Ukrainska Pravda news website on July 24, complete with handwritten notes attributed to DPM Klyuyev. End note.) Bezsmertniy explained with glee that he wrote the list so that the Ukrainian public would believe Regions was preparing for the election, thus forcing Regions to participate. He believed all would be clear after Independence Day (August 24), when the campaign will really heat up.

15. (C) Bezsmertniy said he was also pessimistic about the CEC's ability to work productively--because it was so split between coalition and opposition members, one side could always block quorum. To test this theory, before the CEC went on vacation, the Presidential Secretariat had provoked a conflict within the CEC, which had demonstrated that the CEC commissioners were split 50-50.

Elections Won't Change Much

16. (C) Bezsmertniy believed that the September 30 election would be the first one where the elite breakdown won't change. Bezsmertniy had thought Lutsenko would be big in five years, but the early elections have destroyed him. (Note. Lutsenko himself told Ambassador in January that he need a couple of years to really build a political party.

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End note.) Tymoshenko was the driver for the election. She had voted to override Yushchenko's veto of the CabMin law, leading to a significant imbalance of power, and threatening impeachment--nothing would stop her from getting to new elections. In general, Bezsmertniy thought all the major parties might get fewer votes. His prediction of the voting was OU-12%, BYuT-18% Regions-29% or more, and CPU-3%.

Coalitions Choices: The Source of All Evil or Yanukovych?

17. (C) In terms of post-election coalitions, Bezsmertniy was equally pessimistic. He did not think that BYuT-OU would win, but at the same time, after all that has happened, he did not see a Regions-OU coalition as likely either. In the end, he thought Regions and the Communists would go back into a coalition together. However, any combination of forces was dependent on the President. If Yushchenko took action right away, there could be an OU-Regions coalition, but the President would have to be convinced that such a union could pave the way for reforms. Regarding a possible alliance with Tymoshenko, Bezsmertniy said "if the source of all evil had a name, it would be Yuliya Tymoshenko,"--she was power-hungry and did not want to be in a coalition with anyone. However, he conceded that a coalition with BYuT was still a better option than with Regions. In his view, Tymoshenko would only agree to a coalition government with her as PM, but that could be okay if OU picks the First Deputy PM--either Presidential Secretariat Head Baloha or former PM Yekhanurov.

18. (C) In general, Bezsmertniy thought that Yanukovych versus Tymoshenko as coalition partner in the medium-term didn't matter, since both will attack Yushchenko as a competitor for the presidential elections. The bottom line was that there

will be no broad coalition and the next two years until the presidential election will just be a period of waiting. Either Yushchenko and Yanukovych will destroy each other or one will win completely; this conflict will bring Tymoshenko to the top.

Need for Compromise and Deeper Change

¶9. (C) From a long-term perspective, Bezsmertniy thought Ukraine needed a compromise among elites in order to end political fighting. All European organizations--Council of Europe, OSCE, the European Parliament--have signaled that Ukrainian leaders should reach an agreement. OU and Yushchenko needed to make a decision soon, he argued; procrastination was hurting Ukraine. Moreover, Ukraine needed a generational change--younger people with a European world view and education--to take over the government. Issues like the status of Russian language and the conflict between the two Orthodox churches were artificial--they didn't fit into Ukraine's proclaimed European course. Bezsmertniy added that he noticed Yanukovych had stopped talking about two state languages, but Tymoshenko was still raising it.

¶10. (C) Bezsmertniy expected Kyiv municipal elections sometime after the Rada elections. A new constitution would follow, perhaps by fall 2008. The Presidential Secretariat had already prepared several completely separate constitutional projects, one based on the French model, one on the Polish, and a third, less-developed on the U.S. model, and was trying to decide which fit Ukraine best. (Note. Bezsmertniy passed us copies of the drafts. End note.) Yushchenko would likely announce his preferred constitution on August 24 (Independence Day).

¶11. (U) Visit Embassy Kyiv's classified website:
www.state.gov.gov/p/eur/kiev.
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